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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a study that examined the "encounter" stage (adaptation to the new role) of a faculty member who is promoted to Department Chair. The quantitative study consisted of a national survey of 808 Department Chairs from 101 universities categorized as Research I and II and Doctorate granting I and II by the Carnegie Council. Respondents were asked about job satisfaction, their personal adjustment to the new role, and personal and professional time allocations affected by the new role. Among the findings were the following: (1) 88% indicated that they had less time for research and writing and were forced to find time in order to save their place in the academic world; (2) 82% of all Chairs indicated that being chairperson reduced the time available for keeping current in their academic fields: (3) 78% claimed less time for teaching after the transition; (4) some Chairs pushed research into their personal time (weekends or time at home after work); and (5) 77% of Chairs indicated that they had less time for leisure. Implications of these findings are discussed. An appendix contains the survey document. Contains 13 figures and 17 references. (GLR)

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The Transition of the University Department Chair: What Must Be Left Behind?

by

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The position of University department chair is pivotal in higher education in the United States. The chair is the critical connection between faculty and administration which provides leadership, establishes climate, builds curriculum, and formulates and implements goals for the faculty and for the department (McLaughlin, Montgomery, & Malpass, 1975). Chairs are essential to the success of an academic institution. They are the necessary link between the managerial and technical (academic) core of the university (Bare, 1986).

The importance of the chair to the effectiveness of the university is clear and yet department chairs often see themselves as scholars who, out of a sense of duty, are temporarily responsible for the administrative tasks that must be tended to so that other professors can continue with their teaching and research (Milstein, 1990).

A department chair is socialized and trained in an academic discipline, and yet is asked to serve as an administrator. Those accepting the position often come without leadership training, without a clear understanding of the role ambiguity, and without the awareness of the cost to their academic career and personal lives (Creswell, 1986).

The transition from faculty member to university department chair is an abrupt change (Bennett, 1982) from a collegial, discipline-based world to a hierarchical, university-based reality. The change is severe and must be made quickly. This paper investigates the transition of university faculty members as they become socialized to

the role of chair by looking specifically at how the amount of time allotted for professional and personal activities changes after the transition. In short, it looks at what must be left behind.

Theoretical Framework

The transition of the university faculty member to department chair was investigated using a theoretical framework from the field of organization socialization which studies the process by which an individual comes to appreciate the values, abilities, behaviors, and knowledge essential for assuming an organizational role. To put it more simply, it is the process by which a newcomer learns and is taught "the ropes" (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Organizational socialization has been divided into three stages: the anticipatory, the encounter, and the adaptation phases (Merton, 1957; Wanous, 1977; Van Maanen, 1976).

The anticipatory phase occurs before the transitioner enters the new position. It is during this phase that the transitioner forms a mental image of the new position (Merton, 1957). All the learning that occurs before the newcomer enters the profession is part of this stage (Porter, Lawlor and Hackman, 1975). During the anticipatory phase, transitioners form expectations about the position and transmit, receive, and evaluate information (Feldman, 1976). Formal courses of study, training programs, apprenticeships, and internships all occur during this stage.

The anticipatory stage is followed by the encounter stage. It is during this phase that the expectations and realities of the position come together. The newcomer begins the new occupation, sees and

experiences the reality of the position and attempts to discover how to function in the new environment (Porter, Lawlor. & Hackman, 1975; Van Maanen, 1976).

This study looks at the "encounter" stage which begins with the entry to the position and lasts until the transitioner has adapted to the new role. Louis (1980b) has identified some key features of the newcomer experience and presented a model for understanding the processes of newcomer coping or sense-making which take place during the encounter phase. According to her model, changes, contrasts, and surprises constitute major features of the encounter stage of the entry experience.

Changes are the objective differences between the old and new situations experienced by the transitioner. They are publicly seen and can be known in advance.

A contrast is defined as the difference which an individual transitioner perceives between his or her old and new situations. Contrasts are privately, rather than publicly, noted and cannot be predicted in advance of the transition (Louis, 1980a, 1980b). Since contrasts are person specific, they are unique to each individual who undergoes a similar role change. A contrast involves not only acquiring a new role but also letting go of part of the past to make room for the new situation (Lewin, 1951; Argyris, 1964; Bridges, 1980).

The surprise, the third feature of the encounter phase of the entry experience, is defined as the difference between an individual's anticipation and the reality of the experiences in the new

setting. Adaptation, the third phase of socialization, is the stage during which the transitioner moves from newcomer to insider.

Methods

In order to provide the breadth and scope provided by survey techniques and the finely grained detail provided by the interview method, this study combined the qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative portion of the study consisted of a field study consisting of a series of semi-structured, open-ended interviews with chairs. Subjects for this field study were located in one research university and were chosen to represent a variety of disciplines, ethnicity, gender, and length of time in office. The quantitative study consisted of a national survey of 808 department chairs from 101 universities categorized as Research I and II and Doctorate granting I and II by the Carnegie Council. The questionnaire, which 70.2% of surveyed chairs returned, was sent to a stratified sample of chairs representing all eight classifications of academic disciplines as established by Biglan (1973).

Chairs were asked to indicate how the time allocation of their personal and professional lives was altered after they became department chairs. They were also asked to indicate if they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the changes. Respondents indicated whether they had more, less, or the same amount of time available for 5 areas of their personal lives: family, friends, leisure time, spiritual time, and civic activities. In the professional area of their lives, they were asked to indicate how time allotment changed toward their research and writing, remaining current in their

academic field, teaching, service, contact with students, contact with colleagues and friends within the institution, and contact with colleagues and friends outside of the institution. A copy of these questions can be found in the Appendix to this paper.

Results

A transition involves more than merely acquiring a new role, it also involves letting go of part of the past to make room for the new situation. As university faculty members moved into the role of department chairpersons, they discovered that they were forced to devote less time to certain areas of their private and professional lives. Since the amount of time was limited, some activities had to be forfeited or "let go of" when professors assumed the role of department chair in a university. The time demands of the administrative tasks required that a chair's allocation of time be changed. Data from both the field study and the national survey were used to determine in what areas time was forfeited and whether or not chairs were satisfied with the changes.

Department chairs were surprised by the amount of time necessary to perform administrative duties. Meetings, paperwork, and the nature of administrative work took up much more time than they had anticipated. "This job is a time sink," and "administration expands to fill the time available" were comments from chairs in the field study.

Administering the academic department took time from both the personal and professional areas of a chair's life. Initially this was

difficult. As one chair said: "At first I didn't want to give up anything I just wanted to add new things to my life."

Results of the study indicated that the most salient change in a chair's personal life was in the reduced amount of time available for leisure pursuits. As illustrated in figure 1, a portion of leisure time was eliminated from the life of 77% of the respondents. Sixty-two percent of the chairs had less time for leisure and were dissatisfied with the change while 15% were satisfied with less leisure time. Only 22% spent the same amount of time on their leisure activities before and after the transition.

One chair in the field study, who had been in office for four years, agreed with the majority of those in the survey who were dissatisfied with less time for leisure. He stated: "I think that the best job in the university is the full professor with no administrative things. In the Springtime I used to like to walk out about 2:00 and go fishing. I just don't get to do that much any more."

While the largest loss of personal time for chairs was reported to be leisure time, it was closely followed by the amount of change chairs found in time available for family and friends. As shown in figure 2, 65% of the respondents in the national study indicated that they had less time with family, 33% had the same amount of time and only 2% had more time. Most of those who found their time allocation unchanged were satisfied with that situation. However, most of the chairs who indicated that they had less time with their families were dissatisfied. The 65% with less time are divided into two categories: fifty-eight percent who were dissatisfied with the new time allocation and 7 percent who were satisfied. The

dissatisfaction was echoed by those in the field study. "I don't spend as much time with my kids as I'd like and when I do I'm often preoccupied...and I've pretty much given up summers." Another mentioned that when his family became secondary he didn't like himself as much. "It may be the time of my life. I have two kids in middle school. I need to be around for their value challenges."

Time with friends was diminished nearly as much as time with family. As shown in figure 3, 56% of respondents in the national survey indicated less time with friends, 41% found their time with friends unchanged and only 1% had more time. Most of those who found no difference were satisfied with that situation. Chairs were, however, dissatisfied when they had less time for friends with 49% dissatisfied and only 7% pleased.

While chairs found that they had less time for leisure, friends, and family than they did as professors, the amount of time used for spiritual concerns and civic activities remained relatively stable. As with earlier questions, chairs who indicated no change in time allocation were satisfied with the situation while those who found less time available were dissatisfied.

Spiritual time was much less affected by the change in job description with 61% of chairs indicating that there was no change in the amount of time available for spiritual concerns. As figure 4 illustrates, 59% of chairs were satisfied with that their amount of time was changed and only 2% were dissatisfied. Thirty-four percent found less time for the spiritual dimension of life with 28% dissatisfied and 6% satisfied with the change.

Time for civic activities was also little affected by the move from professor to department chair as is illustrated by figure 5. Fifty-three percent of the chairs surveyed had the same amount of time for civic activities before and after the role change. Fifty-one percent were satisfied with that time allocation while 2% were dissatisfied. Thirty-eight percent indicated that they had less time for civic activities with 15% pleased with the change and 23% displeased.

In summary, chairs found the personal area of their lives changed. They had less time for leisure pursuits, family, and friends. The transition left the amount of time available for spiritual and civic activities relatively unchanged.

After becoming chairs, professors also found the time available for professional pursuits altered. After the transition they had much less time for research and writing, remaining current in their disciplines, and teaching; and their contact with students was diminished. The majority of chairs found their time for service and colleagues within the institution either unchanged or increased while time for colleagues and friends outside of the institution either remained unchanged or decreased.

Research and writing was the area of professional life most affected when professors became chairpersons. Figure 6 displays the responses given by chairs when questioned about change in time for research and writing and remaining current in their discipline. Only 9% found their time for research and writing unchanged while a full 88% found that serving as chair diminished their available time for

these tasks. Eleven percent were pleased with this time allotment while 77% were displeased.

The contrast in amount of time available for research before and after becoming chair was also mentioned as a source of frustration by all chairs in the field study. One chair said:

> One of the real real problems, particularly in the sciences and engineering where research is a major component of a faculty position, is that if you become a department chair for any length of time at all...you are dead. You can never go back to research again. You won't be able to get funding, you'll be out of touch with things and so what are you going to do? Your career is dead.

Some began their term of office intending to take off enough time to continue their research activities. One chair began with a firm commitment to leave her office two afternoons a week in order to write. She found that it became less possible over time and by the third year of her appointment as chair, that plan had become completely abandoned.

Another chair found that he had to abandon research time during the work day and do his work on his own time. After two years of that arrangement, he could no longer maintain the pace. "I'm tired after an eight hour day of the brevity, fragmentation, and variety of administrative work."

Subjects in the national survey also indicated less time for remaining current in their disciplines. As illustrated in Figure 7, 82% of all chairs indicated that they had less time for keeping current in

their fields, 77% were dissatisfied with this change while 5% were satisfied. Only 15% felt that they had the same amount of time for keeping current in their field as they did before they became chair.

Figure 8 illustrates that a substantial change in time for teaching took place when professors became chairs. Seventy-eight percent of the chairs indicated that they had less time available for teaching, but not such a high percentage was displeased with this change. Forty-three percent of chairs did not like the change but 35% were satisfied with relinquishing some of their teaching time. Eighteen percent indicated that their time in the classroom remained unchanged. The fact that not all chairs were dissatisfied at having less time for teaching was reinforced in the field study.

The reduction in time available for teaching was sometimes welcomed by those in the field study. "I love teaching but not three classes per year" and "I think I was ready to give up constant involvement in teaching...there was no question that I was good at it but I was ready to give it up to go into administration," were comments of chairs who welcomed the change. Some were pleased to be rid of the paper and exam grading but didn't like letting go of the planning and the actual teaching.

Chairs also found that they had less time for contact with students. As illustrated in Figure 9, 49% reported less time, 11% were satisfied with the loss and 38% were not. Becoming chair allowed 20% of the chairs to have more time for student contact and 29% to have the same amount of time

Figure 10 illustrates the changes in allocation of time professional service. Thirty-five percent of surveyed chairs

indicated that the amount of time they had available for service activities increased and 24% were satisfied with that change. Thirty-eight percent reported the same amount of time used for service while 25% showed a reduction in time for these activities. Twelve percent were satisfied with that loss while 13% were not satisfied.

Figure 11 presents the amount of time change chairs experience in contact with colleagues and friends within the institution. Thirty-four percent of chairs found that they had an increased amount of time for contact with colleagues within the institution after they became chair while 42% had the same amount of time. Only 23% reported less time with 4% satisfied and 19% dissatisfied.

Figure 12 displays the graph which illustrates the allocation of time with colleagues and friends outside of the institution. It illustrates that 16% of chairs report more time, 44% report the same amount of time and 38% indicated that they had less time. Three percent were satisfied with less time while 35% expressed dissatisfaction with the change.

In the professional area of their lives, the largest percentage of chairs found that they had less time for research and writing, followed by time to remain current in their disciplines. Teaching was third area affected by a professor's transition to chair. Chairs were almost unanimously dissatisfied by the lack of time for research and writing, and remaining current in their discipline. However, a larger percentage of chairs were satisfied with the reduction of time for teaching.

The results of the study indicate that chairs' academic and administrative tasks exist in dynamic tension. The time demands of

administration force a department chair to forfeit certain aspects of the academic profession. By combining the responses of both the personal and professional areas of life, an interesting picture emerges which describes where chairs find the time to perform administrative duties for which they were not responsible as professors. Chairs generally indicated dissatisfaction when they had less time for any activity while they were satisfied when there was more time or the same amount of time available.

Conclusions

Figure 13 displays the rank of the twelve items in the survey arranged from left to right with the leftmost representing the area in which most chairs indicated a loss of time. Those who responded to the survey indicated that the top four areas where they had less time were: research and writing, keeping current in their fields, teaching, and leisure followed by family, friends, time for contact with students, contact with colleagues and friends outside of the institution, civic activities, spiritual concerns, profession service, and contact with colleagues and friends within the institution. The first four areas, all of which were indicated by more that 70% of chairs surveyed, will be discussed in detail.

Most chairs surveyed (88%) indicated that they had less time for research and writing after they became department chairs. This has implications for those who intend to return to faculty when their term of office is complete. A quotation from a chair in the field study who regarded the department chair as a temporary occupation illustrates this point.

> I don't want to be a department chair for the rest of my life. I want to return to the academic side of things after I've done my administrative tour of duty. It's almost essential that one stay continually active in research lest one falls behind....I'm hedging my bets.

The dire predictions of what can occur if a chair gives up his or her research program seem to have proven true in the case of one long term chair who had given up his research, lost his extramural funding and quit taking new graduate students six or seven years after becoming chair.

> I refrain from asking faculty to do a lot of the day to day mundane kind of things. I take care of these myself because if they are going to be productive researchers, I can't bother them with these things....I didn't have the career that I anticipated, but I've been here so long it would be stupid for anybody else to take the same road that I have and jeopardize their research productivity and it will do that.

The administration-research dilemma was true for all chairs who attempted to maintain their programs of research. They were compelled to find time to research in order to save their place in the academic world. They were surprised at the toll that administration took on their research programs and this surprise continued as they repeatedly made adaptations in order to pursue their programs so that they would be viable department members when they returned to faculty. Some chairs in the field study were able to maintain

their research by working in concert with a group of researchers or graduate students.

One chair stated that he continued his research "only in the sense that I nave graduate students, post doctoral research assistants. They research. I do little 'hands on' research except proposal writing and manuscript preparation." Another chair who has seen a decline in his productivity joined a research group because he realized that "writing will require more collaboration that it did in the past. I will be accountable to produce as well."

Eighty-two percent of all chairs indicated that being chairperson reduced the amount of time available for keeping current in their academic fields while 78% indicated that they had less time for teaching after the transition.

Some chairs gave up teaching in order to continue their research programs while others gave up research in order to teach. Most chairs found it nearly impossible to do both. In order to resolve the negative effect which the chair's position had on research productivity, some chairs cut down on their teaching load, "because you can always go back to that." One chair who maintained his research program, but cut his teaching, found that:

> Teaching is very time consuming, that takes far more time than research. Because the research is open ended, you can do it at odd times. But you've got to meet the class at that scheduled time and it conflicts with travel and all of the other things I have to do so many times.

One chair who abandoned his research but maintained his teaching and, as a result, has not been promoted to full professor,

found that teaching was easier to keep up with than research. "The teaching commitment you can't shirk so much because classes meet on a regular basis and you have to go. Research you do when you have time and you have to make time."

Some chairs, who maintained their research while teaching and serving as chair, pushed their research into their own personal time. Weekends or time at home after a full day of work were used for research purposes.

Seventy-seven percent of chairs indicated that they had less time for leisure after they became department chairs. Their time was no longer their own. One chair stated that when he was on faculty, he could go into his office on Tuesday and Thursday, "do what I have to do, teach my classes, get out of here... Now it means that I've become very visible. I know more people that I've ever known in my life." The remaining eight items for which chairs indicated there was less time were family (65%), friends (56%), students (49%), contact with colleagues and friends outside of the institution (38%), civic activities (38%), spiritual concerns (34%), service (25%), and contact with colleagues and friends within the institution (23%).

Implications

The literature of organizational socialization suggests that orientation programs which provide a realistic, rather than idealistic, picture of the job create positive results for both the organization and the individual (Wanous, 1977).

This look at the transition process of the chair allows a picture of the role of university department chair to emerge which has

practical implications for future and current chairs as well as university administration. By looking at the changes in time allocation potential chairs can gain a glimpse of the position and, therefore, make an informed decision on whether or not to serve. Entering the role with a clear vision of its effect on teaching and research programs may allow potential chairs to self select depending upon their interest in the regular faculty assignments of research and teaching, or to negotiate their role in advance

Perhaps senior faculty who have interest in administration skills and are willing to suspend their research agenda will choose to take over the responsibility. Even young faculty with an interest in administration may consider the chairpersonship an opportunity to "test the waters" to see if they are truly suited to administrative work. Chairs who are still actively involved in their research programs may look at the data and realize that the chair position is not a viable option at that time.

The study indicates that chairs forfeit time for leisure, family friends, research and writing, keeping current in their academic fields, and teaching. Therefore, a professor who is satisfied with his or her life as it is, who enjoys leisure pursuits and time with family and friends, who is a productive scholar and who enjoys teaching may well be advised not to accept a position as chair of a department. On the other hand the chair who is tired of teaching and has reached a time in life when he or she is willing to spend less time on research may find that accepting a term as department chair would be a good decision. The fact that most existing chairs indicated dissatisfaction with the areas in which they have less time is also

significant to ponder. Professors undergo a lengthy socialization process to their profession and do not easily make the transition to an administrative role.

Assuming the role of department chair can be an exciting opportunity for the university professor. It should, however, be entered into with an awareness of the potential affect on the professional and personal areas of life. The time demands of the role should be carefully considered in light of other areas of the professor's life. At what stage of life can these demands best be met? Undertaken at the correct time, becoming department chairperson can be a wise career move; undertaken at the wrong time it can be a personal or professional disaster.

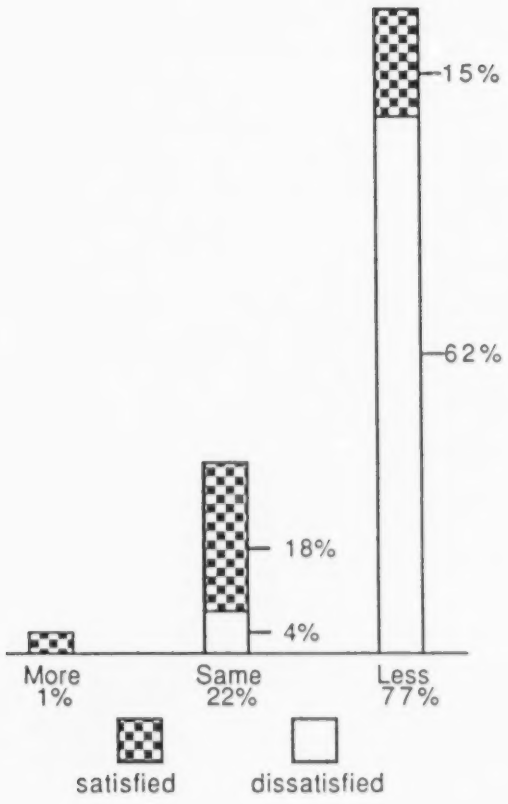

Figure 1: Change in Allocation of Personal Time For Leisure

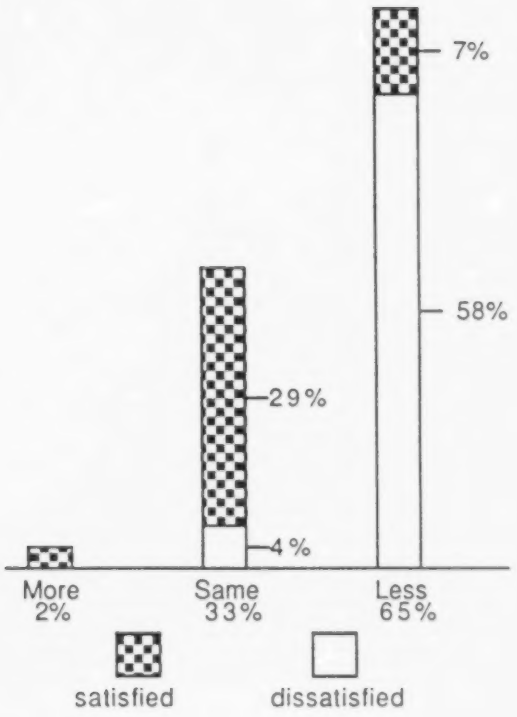

Figure 2: Change in Allocation for Personal Time to Family

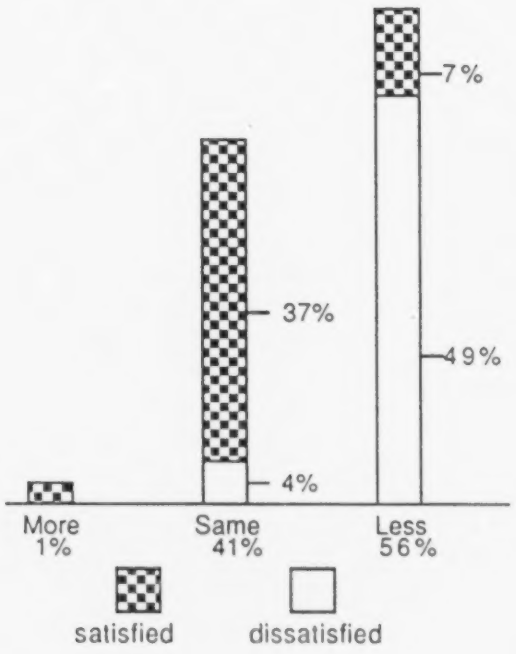

Figure 3: Change in Allocation of Personal Time to Friends

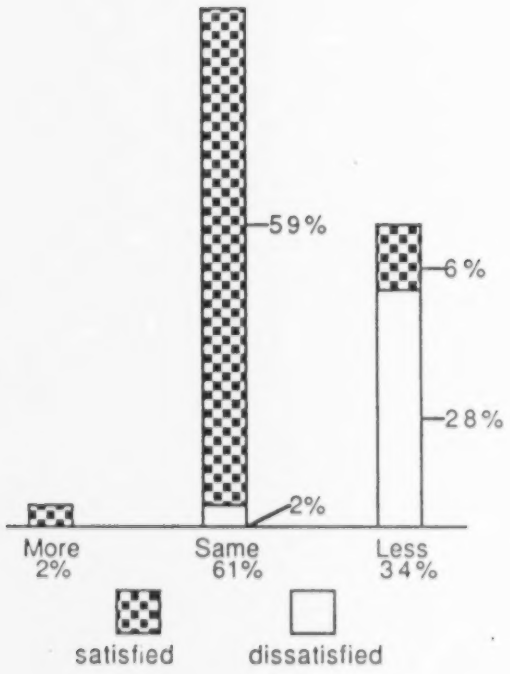

Figure 4: Change in Allocation of Personal Time to Spiritual Concerns

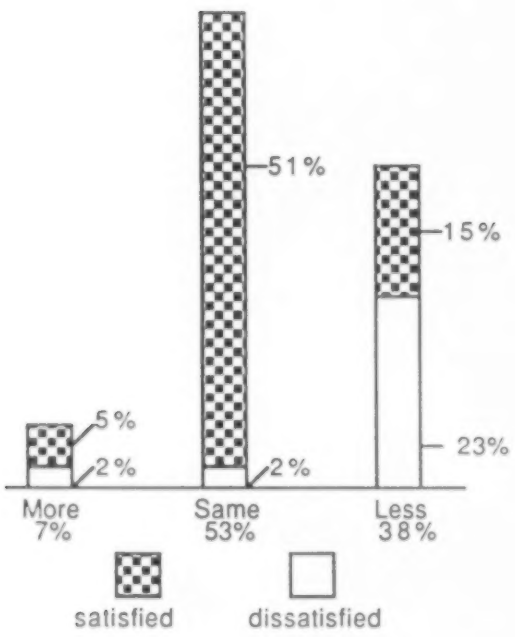

Figure 5: Change in Allocation of Personal Time to Civic Activities

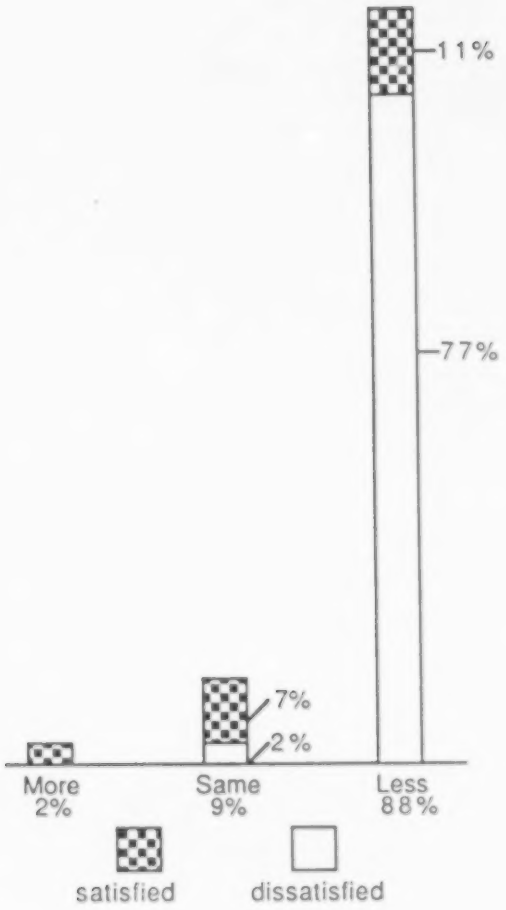

Figure 6: Change in Allocation of Professional Time for Research and Writing

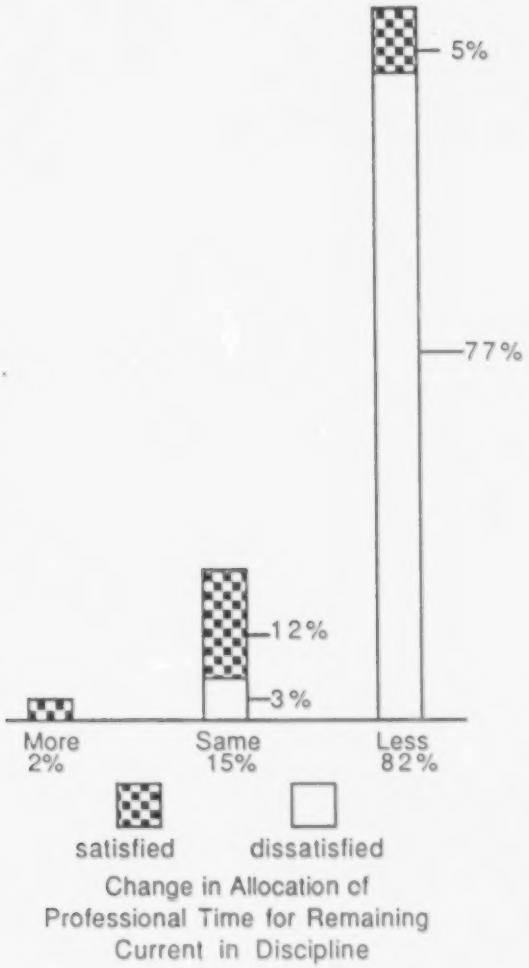

Figure 7: Change in Allocation of Professional Time for Remaining Current in Discipline

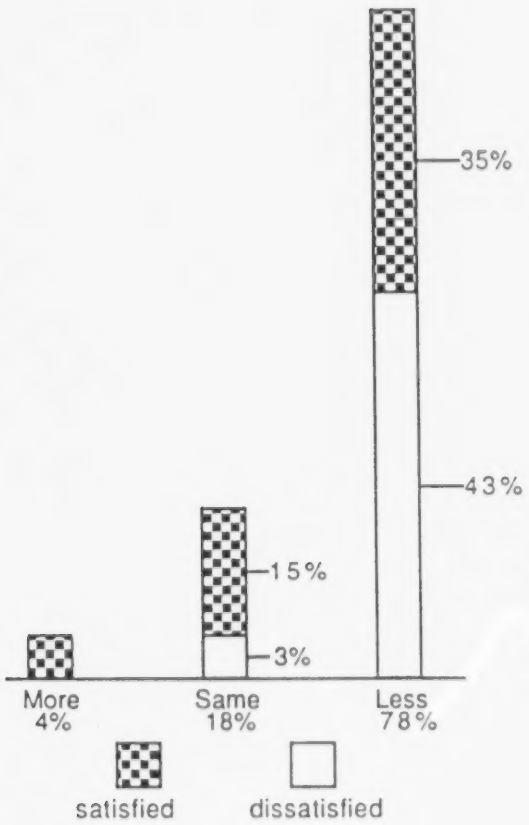

Figure 8: Change in Allocation of Professional Time for Teaching

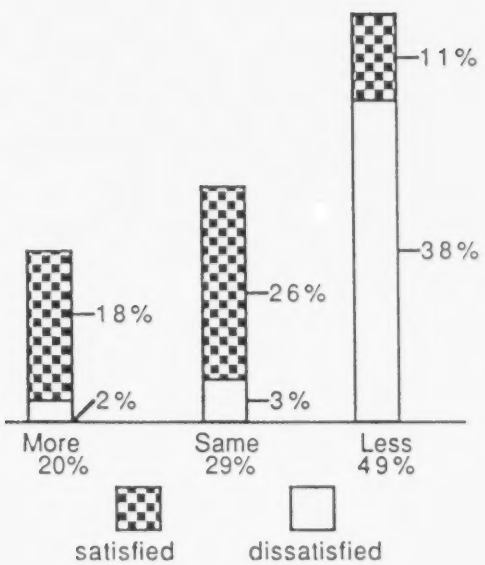

Figure 9: Change in Allocation of Professional Time for Contact with Students

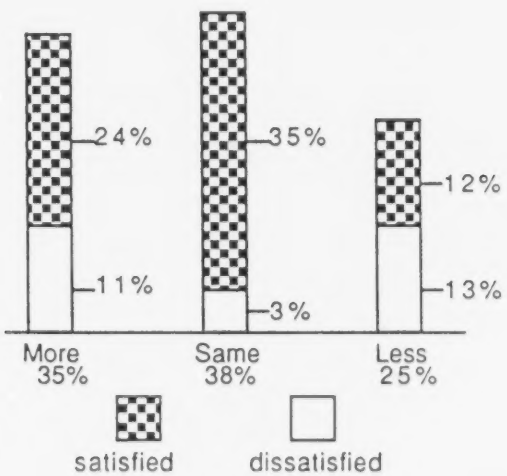

Figure 10: Change in Allocation of Professional Time for Service

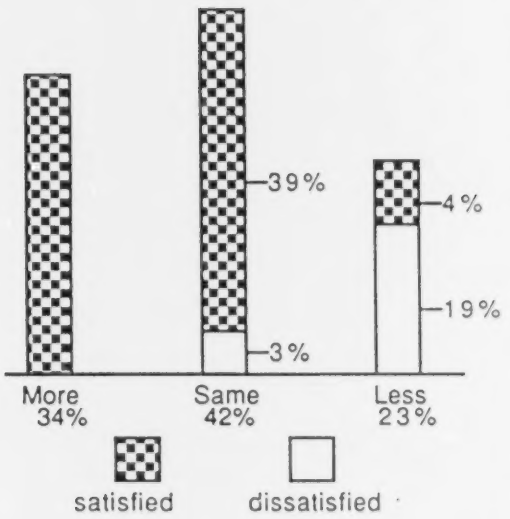

Figure 11: Change in Allocation of Professional Time for Contact with Colleagues and Friends Within the Institution

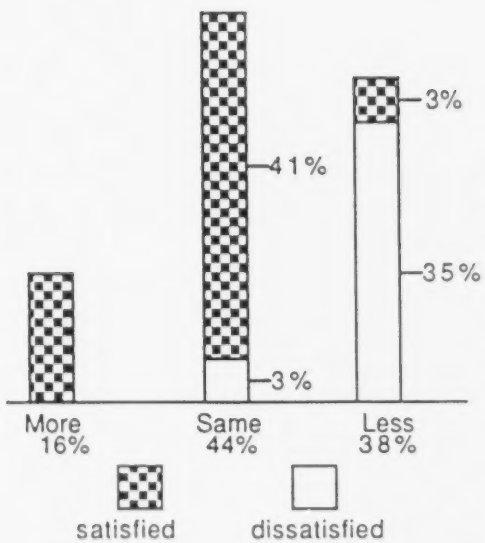

Figure 12: Change in Allocation of Professional Time
for Contact with Colleagues and Friends Outside of the Institution

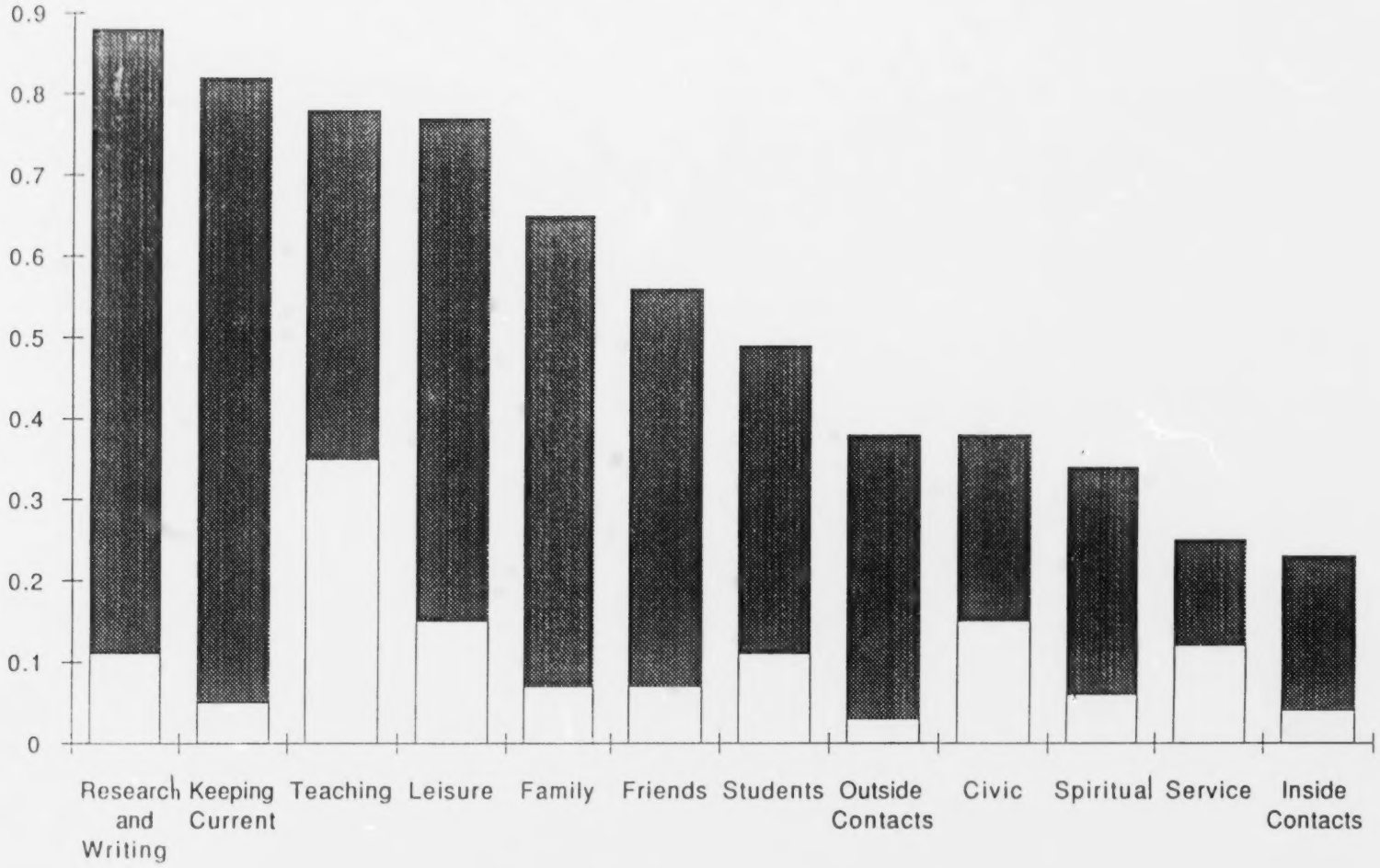

Figure 13: Percentage of chairs indicating less time for personal and professional activities

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APPENDIX

	More time	Same amount of time	Less time	Are you satisfied with this time allocation? Yes	No
Personal					
Family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leisure time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spiritual time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Civic activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Professional					
Research/writing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Remaining current in discipline	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Contact with students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Contact with colleagues and friends in your institution	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Contact with colleagues and friends outside your institution	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Thank you for your assistance.